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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ WFP reports Krajina Serbs strengthening blockade of humanitarian deliveries into Bihac pocket as malnutrition and hunger threaten population.

+ Secretary-General sends Under-Secretary-General Ismat Kittani to Angola to discuss peace process.

+ Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen convenes meeting to speed up disbursement of humanitarian aid promised for Rwanda.

+ Iraq's deputy Prime Minister briefs Secretary-General on his Government's compliance with Security Council resolutions.

+ United Nations launches consolidated inter-agency appeal for $14.6 million for displaced persons in Sierra Leone and refugees in Guinea.

+ Commission on Status of Women begins three-week session in New York in preparation for Beijing Conference.

+ United Nations Drug Control Programme is running out of money, says its Director-General.

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Malnutrition and hunger still threaten thousands of people in the Bihac enclave, according to the World Food Programme (WFP). Though 10 food convoys reached the area in February, the 920 metric tons of food delivered, fell far short of the 20,000 tons needed by more than 200,000 people in the pocket. Only 20 percent of the population has received any food aid over the last six months.

The WFP said the Krajina Serbs seemed to be strengthening their blockade of humanitarian relief as part of a coordinated strategy to deny food to the most vulnerable people in Bihac. Food convoys into Sarajevo have also been blocked since 27 February, and deliveries into the eastern enclaves of Zepa, Goradze and Srebenica are being disrupted again. On 8 March, the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) suspended humanitarian assistance to areas controlled by Krajina Serbs until access into the Bihac pocket was guaranteed.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decided to send his Special Advisor, Under-Secretary-General Ismat Kittani to Angola. Mr. Kittani, who left today, will hold discussions on ways to move the peace process forward.

The Secretary-General will submit a report to the Security Council on 25 March on whether conditions for the deployment of military units of the United Nations Angolan Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) are being met.

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The humanitarian situation in Rwanda is becoming more urgent as desperately needed aid funds promised to the Government have failed to materialize, according to a United Nations spokesman. In an effort to speed up the process, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Peter Hansen will convene a meeting tomorrow with representatives of 14 Governments, the European Union, the World Bank and UN agencies.

The UN launched two major fund-raising drives in January to raise more than $700 million for rehabilitation and reconstruction in Rwanda. However, donors have failed to deliver on their commitments, which was causing a great deal of frustration, the spokesman said. The situation in the country was extremely serious and the Rwandan Government did not have the resources to function without assistance.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met yesterday with the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Tariq Aziz, at Mr. Aziz's request. The Deputy Prime Minister briefed the Secretary-General about discussions between Iraqi officials and the Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission on the Disarmament of Iraq, Rolf Ekeus.

Mr. Aziz also informed the Secretary-General of further steps Iraq had taken to comply with Security Council resolutions. The Secretary-General expressed the hope that Iraq would continue its cooperation with the UN, to ensure full compliance with relevant Council resolutions.

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The United Nations today appealed for $14.5 million to fund urgent humanitarian activities in Sierra Leone during 1995. The consolidated inter-agency appeal, which was launched in New York by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, will help an estimated 500,000 internally displaced persons in the country and another 200,000 refugees in neighbouring Guinea.

(more)

Four years of fighting in Sierra Leone have caused a massive movement of people in Sierra Leone and the threat of epidemics has increased both among the internally displaced and refugees in Guinea.

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The Fourth World Conference on Women must elicit commitments for action and resources, the Commission on the Status of Women was told today as it began its 3-week session. Conference Secretary-General Gertrude Mongella said it was time for a deeper level of action not further analysis. She said the series of United Nations conferences affirmed the need for new relationships and equal partnerships between citizens and governments and between men and women. The Commission is the preparatory body for the Fourth World Conference on Women, which will be held in Beijing 4 to 15 September.

Nitin Desai, Under Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, said the Beijing Conference was part of a process. Through its series of international conferences, the United Nations was seeking an appropriate role for public policy in a rapidly changing world. "A global social movement is emerging which is holding national and international systems accountable for their performances", he said.

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The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) is running out of money, according to its Executive Director, Giorgio Giacomelli. He was addressing the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as it began meeting in Vienna, Tuesday. The Programme was being forced to say "no" to good projects because funding could not be guaranteed, he said. The tendency of donors to earmark contributions could cause the UNDCP to become "a box filled with projects without the necessary infrastructure". He stressed at least 30 per cent of the Programme's income must be received as general purpose funds.

The representative of France gave an overview of the European Union's five-year drug control plan, stressing the need for improved coordination to reduce expenditure and avoid duplication. The United Kingdom's representative described his country's three-year action plan, emphasizing activities at the local level. He said that limited funding was bound to cause a reduction in UNDCP programmes, but there must not be too severe a decline in project-based work.

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